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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000313

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEPALI MAOISTS KILL TERROR VICTIMS' LEADER

1. (U) On February 15 suspected Maoists shot and killed Ganesh Chiluwal, President of the Maoist Victims' Association (MVA), a local NGO representing survivors of Maoist terror. Chiluwal was gunned down at about 5:00 p.m. local time as he left his office in downtown Kathmandu. A witness said he saw two young men fleeing the scene. Police sources said five shots were fired, three of which hit the 36-year-old Chiluwal.

2. (U) Chiluwal was a former Nepali Congress Village Development Committee Vice-Chairman who had been forced to flee his home in Lamjung District with his family several years ago after a Maoist knife attack landed him in a Kathmandu hospital. He started the Maoist Victims' Association in 1999 in an effort to draw attention to Maoist atrocities and attract financial support for victims. Chiluwal had met several times with US Mission personnel--most recently with the Ambassador on February 5. According to press reports, he had received frequent death threats from the Maoists since his relocation, including one in December demanding that he close the MVA office. On February 12, Chiluwal had led a well-publicized protest against Maoist acts of terror in Kathmandu in which participants, many of them survivors of Maoist attacks, carried black flags and effigies of Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai in a mock funeral procession. The effigy of Prachanda (complete with an enlarged photograph of the elusive leader pasted to its "head") wore a sign proclaiming in Nepali, "I am a murderer." The Maoist Victims' Association had been publicizing a fundraising event planned to be held in Kathmandu on February 19.

3. (SBU) On February 16 the Embassy issued a press statement (copy faxed to SA/INS) condemning the slaying. The French Ambassador told Ambassador Malinowski that he would raise the possibility of issuing a parallel statement with EU Chiefs of Mission the following day. Late on February 17 the French Ambassador advised that the EU had decided not/not to issue a statement. The National Human Rights Commission, the Nepali Congress Party and the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist, however, all released statements decrying the killing.

4. (SBU) Comment: Since the end of the ceasefire, Maoist propagandists have done a consummate job of keeping the international spotlight on Government abuses of human rights (assisted, in some respects, by the security forces' heavy-handedness and imperfect accountability). Chiluwal was an unsophisticated, small-time political figure from a remote, underdeveloped district whose modest efforts to raise awareness of the plight of victims of Maoist terror had met with neither great success or recognition from the international community, the government, the local media, nor even the luminaries of his own Nepali Congress Party. However, nothing irritates the Maoists more than having their acts of terror highlighted--even if it is by someone whose lack of proficiency in English and ignorance of well-packaged fundraising techniques kept him away from many embassies' doors. While it may be hard to believe that the slick, well-oiled Maoist public relations machinery could consider the unpolished Chiluwal a threat to their international image, his accusations apparently hit too close to home. It is regrettable that the EU missions here, whose vigorous defense of human rights in the face of abuses by security forces has been stressed in other joint public statements, could not decide to denounce this vicious and premeditated murder.

MALINOWSKI